



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

EX. 187E
9.177

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
FEB 11 1953
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE.

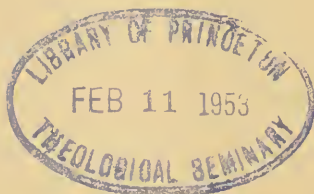
AN ADDRESS

BY

A. W. DRURY, D. D.

DELIVERED SEPTEMBER 7, 1892, AT THE OPENING OF
UNION BIBLICAL SEMINARY.

DAYTON, OHIO:
UNITED BRETHREN PUBLISHING HOUSE.
1893.



B19878
.A.D79

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE.

THEORETICAL and philosophical subjects are often regarded as wanting in practical effect and as unprofitable. Yet as they have to do with foundations and systems and ideals, they underlie and direct practice, and are vital to every interest of man. This does not mean that all that claims to be philosophy or metaphysics is profitable or intelligible. Yet in spite of what is misty, contradictory, or subversive in philosophy, there is much that is clear, that is established, that is stimulating, and that serves as a safeguard. Much that was once speculation now has the character of science. Philosophical training does not mean so much the storing away of philosophy as a learning to philosophize,—to be able to stand or go alone. So a theological education should not mean simply the learning of theology, but also the development of the faculty, so to speak, for *theologizing*. Dr. Davis, in his connection with Union Biblical Seminary, was accustomed to say to his students, "Try to speculate a little." Mastery in any department means the cultivation of the talent that would tend to make us producers in that department.

Two years ago I had the pleasure of meeting the venerable Dr. McCosh in his study at Princeton. I said to him that I had seen the statement that of the four hundred students in philosophy who were under him at Princeton four only had graduated skeptics, and that these four afterward became Christians, three of them entering the Christian ministry. Here he corrected the statement, saying, "There were five. All

of them became Christians except one, and I would have got him too, but he married a frivolous wife and moved to Ohio." I suppose, the influence of the frivolous wife being taken into account, that if he had moved to any other place than Ohio the outcome would have been equally bad.

President Charles G. Finney gave such an exaggerated importance to the will and practical elements that he seemed to his ecclesiastical associates to break away from the old-time orthodoxy; yet in beginning a series of revival meetings he sometimes took as his first subject the theme "Do we know anything?" In the meeting conducted by him many stalwart men, habituated to the thought and ways of the world, were led to Christ. Practical men very generally underestimate their debt to the world's thinkers. If men are not serious, they will not and cannot become Christians; if they do not have convictions, they will not be serious; if they have a wrong or loose view of knowledge, proper convictions are impossible.

IDEALISM

asserts that we cannot know anything beyond our own ideas, that we cannot know the external world,—in some of its forms asserts that there is no external world. Before the idealistic theory was wrought out fully and followed to its consequences, not a few thoughtful men accepted it. The problem of problems is, How can man know? All great philosophers have begun their struggle at this point. Especially where life and thought are not brought close together, it is no wonder that great mistakes are made. In humble things likely to be overlooked or disdained by the proud philosopher,—in things possessed by all men, or within the reach of all men,—are the things out of which philosophy must build, and from which it must meekly accept correction. A hard-headed farmer was vexed at the theories which his boy was proclaiming on his return from college, and with which he was perplexing his sisters. According to the boy's view, mind could not know

matter; the world had no existence apart from man's thought. Said the father, bluntly, "You butt your head against the cellar door, and then tell us whether you do not know there is such a thing as matter." The father not only shut the mouth of the boy, but did it according to principles of sound philosophy. Of course, there are forms of idealism which by subdividing the absurdity, or carrying it farther into the abstruse, seem to lessen or avoid it. No philosophy commends itself by denying or satirizing, instead of translating and vindicating, our primary apprehensions. The hard facts of life have driven idealism, except in its more refined forms, from the field; and realism—the doctrine that man can and does know the external world—is now accepted, if not in words at least in effect, by almost all schools of thought. Yet in things spiritual and religious, the influence of idealism still lingers. In this sphere there is no literal cellar door against which men may butt out their brains, or rather their perverse way of thinking. Yet since man is a moral being, this must continue to be the case. But it is our duty to so develop and present sound theory that no one will err except by his own most glaring fault.

We hear much to-day about

AGNOSTICISM,

a sort of moral know-nothingism. Its advocates and votaries deny the possibility of knowing God, the facts of another life, and Christian elements in general. Most of them admit the fact of knowledge in the things of this world. Yet it has been convincingly shown that the grounds alleged against knowledge of spiritual realities would be subversive of all knowledge, and would lead to absolute and universal agnosticism; and that the grounds on which a knowledge of worldly realities rests, equally warrant confidence in spiritual realities. Partial agnosticism and partial skepticism end in universal agnosticism and universal skepticism,—in other words, in contradiction and absurdity.

A true theory of knowledge will take notice of the whole man and the whole universe, will support all of the interests of time and eternity alike, and will do justice to the dignity of man and the character of God. In knowing there must be a knowing mind and objects to be known. The objects to be known are self, the world, and God. These have an existence apart from the mind's act in knowing. Knowledge is the intellectual cognition of them.

Knowledge and faith are often

UNWISELY DISTINGUISHED

and unwarrantably put at variance. What is one and what the other? Which comes first? Do they differ as to certainty? Does one pertain to one class of truth and the other to another? Anselm said, "Believe in order that you may know." This order, with a slight explanation as to meaning, is to-day regarded as correct. Abelard said, "Know in order that you may believe." Under belief he, as also Augustine before him, had in mind the authority of the church in requiring belief. With this reference he was right, though Augustine seems to countenance the opposite view. Bernard said in effect, "Love in order that you may know." Here he recognizes the fact, without making any distinction between faith and knowledge, that the condition of the heart is of primary importance in reaching moral truth.

The philosopher Kant found a basis for knowledge in general in what he called the pure reason, though even here his principles were skeptical, his distinction as to things in themselves and phenomena and as to absolute and relative knowledge making knowledge itself impossible. For morals and religion he was compelled to improvise a distinct foundation in the dictates of what he called the practical reason. Now religion scorns this special help, and disdains this patronizing regard. Taking the hint from Kant, many would-be philosophers of our times deny to religion all scientific ground, but admit that there is in man a feeling or a susceptibility to faith

which is the legitimate ground for religion. If religion is thus kept on a distinct ground apart from strict intellectual and scientific features, they consolingly allege that no harm can come to religion, no matter what advances are made, or what systems go up or down. Religion does not want immunity at such a cost,—at the cost of its character and just foundations. It asks to stand or fall with the whole fabric of knowledge. Without rancor and without vengeance at the attempt to exclude it from the solid ground on which knowledge rests, it solemnly declares the fact that if removed its roots carry away the soil out of which all certainty must spring.

But guided also by the distinction made by Kant, some theologians have endeavored to point out a special faith-faculty, or have sought to ground everything in Christian consciousness. It is a sorry thing if Christianity must resort to this shift to save itself from criticism and destruction. Schleiermacher introduced this tendency, and since his time others, setting out from this new source, have sought to develop faith into knowledge, or to bring it into union with historical Christianity. These well meant efforts do not serve well their purpose. Some leading German theologians of the present time are trying to effect a complete separation of theology from philosophy. Now philosophy is not a thing in itself, from which we can separate all subject matter. It is the mind's proposed explanation of things,—especially of things not yet fully mastered. If we have confidence in Christianity, we must believe that it is inseparably connected with all that is true; that it is confirmed, interpreted, and applied like other realities. The distinguishing difference between religious science and science in general is in the classes of reality to which the same powers of the soul are directed. Christianity asks no special favors.

Fundamentally, both in strict and popular usage,

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE ARE THE SAME.

As Dr. McCosh repeatedly says, the soul begins its career with knowledge. If it did not have knowledge at the beginning, by no alchemy could it be produced from other materials. Through sense-perception and self-consciousness the soul comes to be possessed of innumerable and widely diversified perceptions of concrete and individual realities. In connection with experience, but supplied from the mind rather than derived from without, necessary and uniform ideas or forms of thought are provided. All these materials are held as knowledge; they are certain, they cannot be disputed. But what are they? They are individual manifestations, or forms of thought connected with the perception of individual examples. Different elements are included together without discrimination. The necessary and the contingent are not distinguished. The whole exists as a nebulous mass without distinctions or classification or definition, constituting the sum of our spontaneous knowledge. It has the quality of knowledge; yet to distinguish this primitive material, back of which the soul cannot go, from the reasoned, classified, and defined knowledge derived from it, the former may suitably be termed faith and the latter knowledge. This does not mean that the latter is more certain; for how can a stream be purer or rise higher than its source? The use of the different terms is for convenience, and it is in accord with common usage. When we resolve something into something previously accepted, we are inclined to say, We know; but when we must accept something for which we are unable to give antecedents other than the authority of the mind itself, we say, in deference, We believe. The only objection to this is that superficial thought may understand that we intend to express a lower certainty, or something other than certainty. Here we see at once the wealth of material that is the possession of the whole race. We do not need to make invidious distinctions. We may notice also, with Aristotle and many other writers, that what common men, without any theory to defend or to combat,

have incorporated in language, is well worthy our study. But we can not, dare not, stop here. Even the humblest and least pretending must make some advance beyond this. Scientific verification, the unifying of thought, the burden of our practical interests, require that we go forward. Unrest, personal doubt, the attack of foes, leave us no alternative. This starting with accredited beginnings, this maturing of our thought, the discrimination of its content, the grasping of its logical and practical force, all this belongs as much to religion as to other matters. Man, as rational, must also, at least in theory, be religious.

Among the various senses for the term *faith*, in addition to that just given, there is one that especially deserves mention. It is that which makes faith to be the knowledge which man, belonging both to the natural and supernatural realms, has of the supernatural, the natural realm in contrast being assigned to reason. But any distinctions are to be deplored which prevent knowledge and reason from being recognized and carried throughout both realms. Reason and knowledge nullify themselves by halting at new subject matter.

With this general statement of the character of faith and knowledge and their relation to each other, we may proceed to notice more particularly the sources of knowledge and the ground for religion.

THE INTUITIONAL BASIS.

It is quite customary, when the ground is demanded for anything which we believe, but for which we cannot give a ready account, for us to say that the belief is intuitional or self-evident. At the same time, much is said in favor of experience, as though experience depended on nothing. Some have much to say against *a priori* procedure, as though intelligence could have its beginning in some other way or had no need of a beginning. As a matter of fact, for science and religion alike, we are obliged to assume the validity of certain fundamental ideas, forms of thought, and mental processes and

products. These elements have been referred to under the common designation *faith*. Some most important truths may have their origin too deep in the human mind or too far back in the twilight of its history, to be detected and exhibited apart from other elements with which they have entered into combination. We should not make our success in distinguishing them the condition of our accepting them in the form in which they do appear. The fact of their diffusion should be in their favor.

Consciousness furnishes the starting point for all of our direct endeavors, on the basis of which we may notice, in the first place,

SENSE-PERCEPTION.

Afterward we may notice the cognition of other than sense-objects. While it is not designed to treat spiritual knowledge first, it yet comes in first and as the basis of sense-perception, even though sense-objects should be the occasion for its awakening. Consciousness knows self as subject in all perception. In the knowledge of self we have the bridge that leads to the objective world, both of matter and spirit. In a similar way, if not by additional steps in the same course, the mind knows the sensorium as affected and then the world external to the body. The soul has knowledge of itself through the activity of the soul, knows the affection of the sensorium as acting upon itself, and knows the outer world through affections originating in the same. In a sense there is in each case a medium. In another sense the soul by an inexplicable act affirms the reality of that which is made to stand in its immediate presence. The object and the medium, so to speak, are comprehended in one indivisible act. The fact that subjective elements may not be in kind like the outward object does not invalidate knowledge; for knowledge must be understood to be simply the intellectual equivalent. For our present purpose it is not important what our notion of matter may be, or what kind of influence is implied in the action of matter on mind or of mind on matter. Of greater importance to us is the

objection that in perception we are often deceived. This makes it necessary for us to distinguish carefully perception proper from inference. The fact, however, that we can detect errors, that dreams may be known to be fictions, is an unassailable argument in favor of truth and knowledge. Thus in sense-perception the soul actually knows objects as such, and having reached in regard to the external world the quality or estate of knowledge, quantities of such knowledge are of little importance in comparison with this attainment. Yet the fact is that through sense-perception the mind acquires a vast amount of knowledge. In its spontaneous and individual form we call it faith or the product of faith.

We may now turn to the

COGNITION OF OTHER THAN SENSE-OBJECTS.

As fundamental to sense-perception, as already stated, the mind in consciousness has knowledge of itself. By a direct, inexplicable act the mind knows its own states and acts. What is afforded by reflection on these will be noticed under rational intuitions. At this point we may ask whether the soul may through spiritual perception know spiritual beings like unto itself. In such a case a knowledge of personality through a knowledge of self would be a primary necessity, and the knowledge of any other person would be to that extent secondary. Yet as a knowledge of self is through the activities of self, so the knowledge of another self may be by affections of which the other self is the necessary condition. In a way similar to the way in which we know self or the external world, may we not perceive spiritual beings? If by perception is meant mental certainty of an object through the representation or affection by which the object is made to stand before us, then the mind may perceive persons,—not bodily shapes, but spiritual beings,—not know something of them, but know themselves. To know them does not mean to know all about them. We know men as capable of contingent and contradictory acts, and

know therefore that deception is possible. Yet the person we may know. In like manner, by spiritual perception or experience, may not God be known,—not in all that he is, nor yet simply that he is? We already know personality in the knowledge of ourselves. The only additional condition is that God be able to produce those affections by which he shall be recognized. That he was able to form the human mind with this reference, and that he is able thus to reveal himself, cannot be questioned. Beyond these suggestions I will not attempt to show that this possibility is realized. I beg leave, however, to quote the opinions of some men eminent as investigators and thinkers. Hermann Lotze puts forward the following hypothesis, which he approves as far as the analogy to sense-perception is concerned: “Now it might be asserted that it is not the external world exclusively which furnishes these necessary data by influence of our senses. Rather it is quite as admissible to think of a divine or supersensible influence upon our interior being by means of which ‘intuitions’ of another species fall to our lot, such as the senses can never supply, and such as constitute just that religious cognition which obtrudes itself upon us with immediate certainty.”¹

Dr. George P. Fisher says: “There are perceptions of the spirit as well as of sense. The being whom we call God may in like manner come in contact with the soul. As the soul on the basis of sensations posits the outer world of sense, so on the basis of analogous inward experiences it posits God. The inward feelings, yearnings, aspirations, which are the ground of the spiritual perception, are not continuous, as in the perceptions of matter; they vary in liveliness; they are contingent in a remarkable degree on character. Hence, religious faith has not the clearness, the uniform and abiding character, which belong to our recognition of outward things.”²

Professor Borden P. Bowne, representing a different school

¹ “Philosophy of Religion,” p. 4.

² “Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief,” p. 26.

of thought, says: "On the basis of certain impressions we posit material objects. On the basis of other impressions we posit spirits like our own. On the basis of its total mental and moral experience the race has posited God. This general conviction in a divine existence we regard as less an inference than a perception. This is shown by the history of the belief, which is older than reflection and speculation."¹

Dr. Samuel Harris, whose valuable writings have been largely devoted to this subject, says: "As through the impressions of sense we perceive our physical environment, so through rational and spiritual principles, sentiments, and susceptibilities we perceive our spiritual environment, the universal and all-illuminating Reason, the absolute Spirit, and the system of personal and spiritual beings related to him. Man is conscious of God in a manner analogous to that in which he is conscious of the outward world."² Professor H. B. Smith characterizes the view that God is known in perceptive intuition as mystical. Yet, may it not be that the rational intuitions, always present even in sense-perceptions, are only more prominent in cognizing God than in other cognition?

Assuming this position to be true, its advantages are obvious. Theology becomes something more than an abstract science. It has all of the naturalness, interest, and rewards of a concrete science. It is evident further that if the soul by its nature has this knowledge of God, it must also have a wide capacity of insight and test as to spiritual truth. I know the danger there is in this affirmation. But as I have often said to my classes, "Peril is no disproof." Moral probation involves peril. It is the abuse of the capacity and prerogative above referred to, that is to be reprobated. To admit the facts in the case is to inspire caution and to point the way to the highest achievements. If an appeal must be made from the constitution of the human mind, the case would scarcely be improved by appealing to God, its author. The faculty by which men in

¹ "Studies in Theism," p. 79.

² "Self-Revelation of God," p. 39.

general become cognizant of religious truth is known as religious consciousness. The same faculty as rectified and enlightened by regeneration and the Christian revelation, is known as Christian consciousness.

Passing from the subject of primary cognition through sense-perception and self-consciousness, we may notice the

RATIONAL INTUITIONS,

which furnish the principles and conditions according to which our spontaneous beliefs and apprehensions are elevated to the rank of knowledge in the sense in which that term is distinguished from faith. Without unnecessary delay I may name the classes of rational intuitions as given by Dr. Harris, many of whose positions are repeated and emphasized, I hope not servilely, in this address. He gives the *true*, the *right*, the *perfect*, the *good*, and the *absolute* as constituting these classes. The rational intuitions are forms of conception or thought back of our spontaneous knowledge, or involved in it, making such knowledge possible. But in reflective consciousness they are apprehended as definite ideas or judgments according to which our original knowledge is verified, systematized, and unified. In other words, they are the ground and essence of reason. The existence of intuitive truth in this sense does not imply that everyone consciously possesses it, or is even ready or compelled to accept it when definitely presented; but that everyone must and does use it when the subjects involved are suitable. As intuitive, it lies at the beginning and at the foundation of knowledge, but as a distinct and evident possession, generalized from a wide number of the acts of the soul, it is among our latest and highest acquisitions. The reason is therefore evident why men can so lightly deny the highest and most evident truth. Even in their denials they must make use of the truth denied. Feeble thinking or a wayward temper may cause thought to be so imperfect or distorted that the needed materials and conditions are wanting; or the absence of reflection may leave the best of materials unused. The

difficulty is not so much that men think erroneously as that they do not think at all, or think without suitable energy or purpose. Mere stupidity can withstand the clearest argument. Herein is shown the dignity and the degradation of man. Fidelity to the intuitions and to the laws of the mind will lead to the firm possession of the loftiest truths, but recreancy and inaction will leave us in the mire of imbecility, contradiction, and spiritual wretchedness. This is only another way of saying that we are moral beings and that we are on probation as to the use of our intellects as well as to our conduct. If men are waiting for compulsion on this line, they will wait in vain. Beginning then with the primitive knowledge of the mind,—call it faith if you will,—there are through the rational intuitions the most valid ground and method for a scientific knowledge of the universe,—a cosmos instead of a chaos, a sound psychology giving a proper knowledge of self, and a scientific theology.

But if a knowledge of God is given in intuition,—in self-consciousness, and with verification through the rational intuitions,—what place can there be for the various

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD,

such as the ontological, cosmological, teleological, and moral? Strictly speaking there is no place for them as independent arguments. They are but different means by which the mind reënforces itself in intuitive truth. As the mind resurveys the different fields of being with reflection fully awake, the content of our thought becomes more luminous, and inference is less embarrassed. The conditions are supplied for the ready and successful exercise of the soul both in perceptive and reflective intuition. It is not intended to deny the usefulness, in one form or another, of these so-called arguments; only, strictly speaking, they are not original or independent arguments, and they go rather to show what God is than that he is.

Lotze says: "These proofs, like all investigations which strive to go back from results to their causes, are only intended to mediate our knowledge of the principle by those of its

consequences which are given, and with this view they presuppose the absolute validity of a truth which knits all the world together."¹ Furthermore, may not God by his immanence in the universe use the universe to produce in the soul those affections whereby he shall be recognized? Also may not the attention of the mind continuously given in reflection to the same line of fact, conduce to the desired clearness and strength of conviction as to the existence and character of God?

We now come to

HISTORICAL CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity as being the highest and fullest expression of religious truth, and as being from the Author of nature, is naturally made to include, as a part of itself, the foundations and beginnings revealed by the light of nature. Usually, any system may be best understood from the standpoint of its own highest expression. Thus much tedious and uncertain investigation becomes unnecessary, and the truth as finally held stands out in its greatest simplicity and power. But the conditions of our age are such that the fundamental doctrines of religion must be examined and verified with the greatest thoroughness possible in the light of nature. Christian thought must parallel and coördinate the legitimate advances in other departments, and show that all truth supports the religious interest of man. In certain junctures, a method not ideally the best, or even disproportionate attention to one side of things, may best meet prevailing conditions and wants. Rarely can men safely be relieved of the most strenuous exercise of which their faculties are capable. Christ himself, with the events leading to him and those flowing from him, constitutes the substance of the new revelation of God. Herein is furnished a new occasion for the use of the word *faith*, applied in this instance to the acceptance on testimony of a divine communication to man. While the contents of that communication may not, in their entirety, certify themselves directly to

¹ Microcosmus, p. 663.

the mind, they may, nevertheless, be called knowledge, as witnessed by the fact that in all of the sciences and spheres of life the term is thus applied. We are so constituted as to form a necessary conviction of truth by this method. In many cases the testimony is less than conclusive, but certainty in proportion to the evidence still remains. The evidence itself is understood to have for its basis natural intuitions. That is, men witness with the senses the authenticating marks of some fact or truth which has not been brought within their range, or the full content of which lacks the quality of self-evidence. Reflection judges as to the sufficiency or competency of the evidence, and gives corresponding credit to what is thus vouched for. The word *faith* seems to be used because as to the facts handed down and the things vouched for, we have no means within ourselves of verification. To bring the evidence down to us and to give it credit, there must be a compliance with the usual requirements of history and the approved laws of evidence. If all this is satisfactory, we cannot refuse to accept the revelation, except by a disuse or denial of rationality. In religion, the Holy Scriptures furnish faith with the crowning facts and truths, miracles and prophecy, which are a part of the historical contents, furnishing their own peculiar sanctions. The great advantage of Christianity—being likewise its great characteristic—is its historic character and authoritative utterances as given in the inspired record. It thus becomes possible as the religion for all men. It may be identified and vindicated. Much in its substance is identical with what the natural reason has reached. Nothing in it is essentially contradictory to what reason declares. Thus the authentication of what is above reason is rationally reached. That Christianity examined on its merits meets the requirements, is confidently claimed. Beginning with the material of Christianity under the name of faith, though holding firmly to its character as knowledge, we may go forward to build up a most imposing system of verified knowledge, properly thus designated. Here again the human intellect is put upon probation, and in this

case the possibility of recreancy and skepticism is doubled, inasmuch as that to be believed and the evidence are not one and the same thing. Yet congruity with intuitive standards as far as they go, the bringing of the vouchers under the senses of men, and the historic character of Christianity in general, will lead earnest inquirers to accept the truth of Christianity as presented in its original standards, the Holy Scriptures, which thus becomes a mine of unfailing wealth. Courage, fidelity, and effort, the sifting of evidence, and the pressing of things to their proper conclusions, even though probabilities may be closely balanced, are necessary at every point. No wonder so many persons are found wanting when put to such a test. The principles on which unbelievers reject the Scriptures, would, if carried out, lead to universal skepticism. And on the other side, clear views as to the foundation of knowledge in general, afford a sure ground for accepting the oracles of Christianity. Thus far nothing has been claimed for Christianity outside of what may be examined and pronounced upon by all men, and no principles have been applied different from those that are constantly applied in the various sciences. In interpreting the contents of revelation, even man's natural reason would say, if the evidence shows that it is indeed a revelation from God, that it is to be interpreted as a revelation coming from a higher source and presumably containing much that is above our natural reason. The great complaint made by Christianity against its opposers, is that they do not think at all, or that they apply principles in regard to Christianity that they would shrink from employing elsewhere.

It might seem that the subject of knowledge would be covered by the twofold reference to intuition and to an objective revelation. And so it would, if no calamity had come to man's moral constitution. Perhaps, also, to an unvitiated constitution, much that revelation gives would have been intuitively manifest. Man's perceptive power has to be reawakened, and he must read the universe in the light of the

NEW CREATION

as well as in the light of the old. The word *faith* is used as denoting the act by which a person enters upon Christian life. It is frequently called trust. It raises to special prominence the exercise of the will, though the exercise of the will is not apart from faith or knowledge as already described. Faith or knowledge in the general or fundamental sense, and faith or knowledge as to what is contained in the Scriptures, are implied as a ground for trust. Trust consists in, or rests upon, our knowledge of a person. We behold God in Christ in his love, manifesting in his countenance the reconciliation brought about by the obedience and sacrificial death of Christ. In salvation we have a fuller, a more realistic view of God than ever before. Never before has our consciousness of self been brought out in such pronounced form. We rest, or walk out, upon such manifestation of character and such assurance of reconciliation. No wonder Spurgeon could sum up his experience in these words: "I beheld him, and he looked on me, and we were one for evermore." Man's will appears in his readiness or effort to come to this living acquaintance with God, or in his suiting his actions to his new realm. The necessary elements of will being taken for granted, it is the faith that sees Christ, or knows God as revealed in Christ, that furnishes the channel of salvation. Those inquiring the way of life are often so directed that faith, or their own state, is made the object. Wise direction will take away every barrier between their vision and God. The act by which this acquaintance with God is reached, as being at the beginning of man's acquisitions as a new creature in Christ, along with all new perceptions of spiritual truth, is called faith, though just as in the former cases it is of the character of knowledge. Usually, however, the term *knowledge* is reserved for the development and accurate setting forth of this new consciousness, and the firm relationship established between this consciousness and the consciousness of man as belonging to the first creation. The

knowledge of God in conversion implies the natural capacity for cognizing God already noticed, or the religious consciousness belonging to the race; but now that it is renewed and faces God in new manifestations, it is known as Christian consciousness. The divine Spirit may make himself known through representations in nature or in revelation. When the conditions are supplied that bring God before the mind, or that turn the eye of the mind to God, by virtue of the constitution of the mind there springs up mental certainty. We call the act, or perhaps the product, faith, and upon this foundation we erect the golden temple of experimental knowledge. The Scriptures continually require that we go forward to knowledge, or go forward in knowledge. The doctrine that our assurance of salvation rests on a knowledge of God is not new to a United Brethren audience, or to the Christian church in general. But its recovery from comparative neglect and its scientific enunciation and philosophic vindication, along with its attendant elements, furnish the storm-center for the greatest theological commotions of our century. Through extravagance, with rapid change from one extreme to another, through capricious and subversive forms, the struggle has gone forward until a new interest has been created in theology, with the beginning of a new clarification of thought. The great thinkers and the great schools of our land are foremost in proclaiming this direct knowledge of God by the Christian believer, and the necessary presence of the Holy Spirit in order to normal or adequate consciousness. The tendency of to-day in more than one department of knowledge is to put judgment in the place of syllogism, and perception in the place of judgment, in many cases in which formerly the opposite course was rigidly pursued. As has been indicated, there is great danger in connection with the doctrine of religious or Christian consciousness. While we cannot wholly avoid danger, we should not meet it with levity or presumption. Some make Christian consciousness a mere sentimental something. Others make doubtful inferences or elements dimly seen more important

than the explicit teaching of revelation. It is well to remember that our consciousness depends on the objects brought before the mind in nature and in revelation alike, and is not therefore an independent source of knowledge. As regards the capacity of different men or different classes of men for Christian faith, for knowledge of God unto salvation, there is no essential difference. We therefore repudiate the implication that religious knowledge is for any particular class of men. Why then do not all have a saving knowledge of God? Simply because they will not receive the truth. God is the same for all men, and the human mind is everywhere the same, but the two must be brought into contact. What has been reached by one mind can be transferred for acceptance or test to another mind. There remains, therefore, slender reason for isolated subjectivism or barren mysticism. The human mind itself tends to lead men into a community of knowledge. Nothing but the willful disuse or perverse use of the mind cuts the consciousness of humanity in twain.

SUMMING UP,

then, we find that many persons make an unwarranted distinction between faith and knowledge. In general, the difference between them is that faith applies to our knowledge at its source, in its individual character and unreasoned form, resting in its own self-evidence, while knowledge is the term used when our spontaneous convictions are rationally verified and accurately set forth. Revelation becomes a new source to us, and again we use the term *faith*, the contents of revelation being in a measure distinct from the historical evidence. Self-evidence in things contained in the Scriptures, while highly valuable wherever appearing, is not always to be found or demanded. In Christian experience we have still a new use for the term *faith*, applying it now, in so far as its intellectual reference is concerned, to a restored and special acquaintance with God. Enough has been said to show that faith, having the same cognitive character as knowledge, is as essential to

physical science and to intellectual and moral science as to theology and religion. It has been shown, also, that men have their developed convictions under their own control,—their activity, their fidelity, their courage, all entering into the nature and completeness of their beliefs. As already indicated, there may be named, with the explanations as given, three sources of religious truth. The first is intuition, the second is revelation, and the third is Christian experience. They are neither distinct nor parallel in what they supply, nor coördinate in authority. As regards authority, natural intuition and reflection examine the credentials of revelation, and then God is heard in what he adds to prior knowledge and assurance. In a special sense, revelation supplies the representations for cognition of reality in Christian experience. Thus the first source bears us up to the second, and then the second to the third,—all of them, however, continuing according to their nature to supply us. Christian consciousness is the restoration and completion of the natural religious consciousness of the race, and thus seems not entitled to rank with intuition and revelation as before described. But inasmuch as its office is to survey, in addition to what belongs to the first creation, new realities and manifestations in connection with the fall and redemption of man, it is right to give it a distinct place. Some persons speak of the church as the third source, probably, having in mind the consciousness in which believers in all ages have been sharers.

Now the practical question arises as to what we are going to do with the wealth with which heaven has dowered us. I trust that I have not spoken without appreciation of our common heritage in the spontaneous beliefs and utterances of men. But the fact that our constitution makes it possible for us to go beyond this, makes it evident that we were not intended to remain here. Doubt and assault and the danger of losing our hold on the science and thinking of our age, compel our action; and the rich possibilities in the establishment and completion of the edifice of Christian truth and in commend-

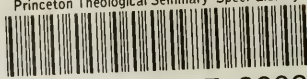
ing our faith to others, inspire us to earnest and tireless effort. Self, God, and the world, the last including all things aside from self and God, furnish the objects of our quest and the materials with which we build. Let it be understood that we begin with individual perceptions and discoveries, and that from first to last the concrete character of our investigations is to be kept in view. This mode of treatment or procedure gives to our work all of the interest and evident character of what we call the natural sciences. I do not ignore the necessity and dignity of abstract thought, or fail to admire those hierarchies of concepts by which man rises to the empire of the universe. Yet in regard to concrete realities more truly than in regard to abstract conceptions he may exclaim with Kepler, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee." The thought of God is enshrined in the universe, and man's mind, a copy of the divine mind, may follow and appropriate that thought. Man, however, is finite, and he must begin with individual things and proceed by safe paces. Yet we have the confidence that the knowledge which we gain is true for all minds and all worlds, and that the humble beginning which we make here will be the foundation for all that we shall gather in the eternity to come. Sloth says that the advantages are not obvious enough; that it is tiresome to examine foundations so closely; and that there is always the hazard of going wrong. This simply means that we are tried in the balance and found wanting. It is our duty and privilege to build up theology as the queen of the sciences; and also to vindicate the truth that not only the knowing mind, as Tertullian expresses it, is "naturally Christian," but that the universe, with its field for innumerable sciences, is also, so to speak, naturally Christian. Within the encasement of faith are the germs from which the harvests of beauty and joy of the future are to spring. First faith, then knowledge, then power, then triumph.

A. W. Dowsy.

BX9878.9.D79

Faith and knowledge : an address

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00047 3662